



**Connecting Students in an
Online Course with the
*Connected eBook***



Connecting Students in an Online Course with the *Connected eBook*

SUMMARY

In an online course, the professor requires the *Connected eBook* to stay on the same “digital page” as his students. He engages with them through personalized notes, diversifies their learning experience by showing videos, enhances their learning by recommending the Study Center, and gives them an opportunity to stay organized with customized highlighting, notetaking, and outlining tools.

Background

Donald E. J. Kilmer, Jr., has been a Professor of Law at Lincoln Law School of San Jose since 2001. His course work includes Constitutional Law, Constitutional Adjudication, and Firearms Law. He is an author of the Aspen casebook, *Firearms Law and the Second Amendment: Regulation, Rights, and Policy*.

In 2019, Kilmer started teaching Constitutional Law online, due to an out-of-state move and changes in the State Bar that permitted a portion of core courses to be taught online. He utilizes Canvas as the course’s Learning Management System as well as Zoom.

Kilmer chose to require a *Connected eBook* for his students because he thought, “the best way to hold students’ interest would be to break up the pedagogical experience.” Kilmer emphasizes the incredible amount of reading that law students must do as part of their education. At his institution, the majority of students work full-time jobs; classes take place in the evening to allow students to maintain their current career. (For this reason, law students complete their degree in four years rather than three.)

Kilmer felt a true need to disrupt the traditional Socratic method, add in discussion, and offer a variety of ways for his students to learn, whether through reading, watching, or listening. Although watching a video is not a substitution for reading the text, he notes, “You’re doing students a disservice if you’re not giving them access to all of the available information.” For Kilmer, this includes the multimedia associated with the text and study tools available in the *Connected eBook*.

EDUCATOR

Donald E. J. Kilmer, Jr.

SCHOOL

Lincoln Law School of San Jose, CA

COURSE

Constitutional Law I & II

COURSE MATERIALS

Constitutional Law: Cases in Context, 4th edition by Barnett and Blackman with *Connected eBook* + Study Center

An Introduction to Constitutional Law: 100 Supreme Court Cases Everyone Should Know (Video Series)

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Implementation

During the very first class, Kilmer spends twenty minutes demonstrating the features and tools of the *Connected eBook* that will help them be successful in the course. For example, as part of a participation grade, students are required to complete a course outline. Kilmer shows how to use the Outline Tool in the eBook to help with the assignment.

He screenshares the first case in the *Connected eBook*, encouraging students to have their own eBook open to the same page at the same time. Kilmer shows them how to use the Case Brief Tool, suggesting the color-coded mnemonic system he developed as a law student to make highlights/notes: **i**ndigo (purple) to highlight an **i**ssue, **r**ed to highlight a **r**ule, **a**mber (yellow) to highlight an **a**nalysis, and **g**reen to highlight the **c**onclusion (IRAC). Finally, Kilmer makes a point to show students how to click on his professor-generated notes and hyperlinks in the eBook for more information.

Outside of class, students are assigned reading from the text and videos to watch in the eBook. He recommends that students complete the *Connected eBook* Study Center assignments for each chapter: answering the multiple choice questions, reviewing flashcards, and answering short answer questions. Kilmer does not require Study Center activities since he gives a short quiz at the beginning of class for credit to encourage the reading of course material prior to class. (The quizzes are created by Kilmer and taken through the course’s Learning Management System.)





Impact

Kilmer shares, “I really like the connection I can have with the students by adding in my own highlights and notes to the *Connected eBook*.” (Notes added to the professor’s eBook appear in every student’s eBook.) Kilmer lists the media that accompanies the text as a second key benefit, and finally, the resources offered in the *Connected eBook* Study Center. While Study Center activities are recommended, not required, Kilmer notes that motivated students are fully utilizing the resources available to them. He typically hears from a handful of students regarding the utility of the *Connected eBook*.

Although videos are assigned to be watched outside of class, Kilmer will often excerpt a video as part of class time. He notes, “It brings important ideological diversity – students aren’t just hearing my voice and my opinion.” Kilmer notes that students sometimes wonder if they’re getting the viewpoint of the legal profession or just one professor’s viewpoint. “By having another professor present (via video) and then me present, I’m exposing my students to a broader perspective of interpretation.”

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Conclusion

To colleagues who are still only using the Socratic method to teach students, Kilmer suggests they explore the possibilities of incorporating effective videos and modern study tools found in the *Connected eBook*.

Kilmer shares, “Being able to have a discussion and literally be on the same (eBook) page with thirty people who may be spread across the globe is digital magic. Ideas move the world, and we can use these ideas in a connected way.” Kilmer sees digital as “the wave of the future,” for, “most importantly, it allows law schools to become more inclusive and reach a broader student population, with increased class diversity, background diversity, and intellectual diversity.”

Kilmer recalls his days as a law student – decades ago – lugging around a heavy casebook, and using a print book in much the same way as a *Connected eBook* can be used today. He concludes, “I used different colored highlighters to organize legal analysis, I wrote notes in the margins, and I would tab pages in the book that were keyed to my course notebook that contained my thoughts and lecture notes. The fact that the *Connected eBook* puts all that in one place is a great academic invention. Aspen is giving students every tool I ever wanted, in a digital format, with the ability to access the material anywhere, anytime. It is a powerful tool for the student.”

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